

PAM.
MISC.

John F. Goucher

No.
THE

FORWARD MOVEMENT
AND
SPECIAL OBJECTS
IN
FOREIGN MISSIONS



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF FOREIGN MISSIONS
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U. S.
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BUILDING,
NASHVILLE, TENN.

Special Object Work in Foreign Missions

BY

REV. S. H. CHESTER.

The essential feature of the Forward Movement in our Foreign Mission work, as to its method, is the assumption by separate churches, societies, or individuals of a definite responsibility for a definite part of the one great work. This method has been pursued in our church on a limited scale for at least a quarter of a century, but it was only about three years ago that it was formally adopted as a policy to be extended as rapidly as possible until it shall become a general policy for the whole church. We have found ourselves for a long time confronted with a growing demand on the part of our contributors to have their contributions directed to some specific part of the work, instead of having them go into a general fund for the support of the cause at large.

In attempting to solve the problem of our finances it has seemed to be necessary to yield more and more to this demand until now, under the name of the Forward Movement, it is the

settled policy of our Executive Committee, endorsed and encouraged by the General Assembly.

There are certain limitations and restrictions, however, which experience has shown to be necessary in conducting the work by this method. There are certain forms of special object giving that have been found to be distinctly not good, and which, therefore, we are refusing to encourage in our work.

One of these is the direct support of individual children in our mission schools. Requests for this privilege from our Young People's and Children's Societies and those who conduct them are almost daily arriving at the Mission Rooms. The request usually includes the procuring for the contributors of the name and, if possible, the photograph of the child to be supported. Our wisest missionaries tell us that they have observed that this arrangement has a tendency to develop a parasitic spirit in children who are thus supported, causing them to grow up with the idea that it is the proper thing for them to be taken care of by their friends in foreign lands and that the burden of taking care of themselves is one that ought never to be put upon them. The plan also introduces invidious distinctions in the schools between those who are thus supported and those who are not. When a certain little girl was told by her missionary teacher of the friends in America who knew her name and were providing for her wants, some other little girls who were only helped by the

general school fund of the mission overheard the remark and said to the teacher: "Have we no friends in America who know our names and care for us?" Then, if the missionary in charge of the school faithfully reports to the home givers all the facts in each case, those facts would sometimes be very discouraging. It is by no means true in mission schools, any more than it is in our Christian schools at home, that all the pupils, although they may be under Christian instruction, grow up to be Christian preachers, teachers, and workers. Many of them remain in the schools only for a time, and then drop out on account of interference on the part of their heathen relatives and friends. Others who may take the whole school course, when they leave the school are overcome by the evil influences that surround them and turn out badly. We may readily see that when such facts as these are faithfully reported to them, the zeal of the home givers would be greatly dampened. For these and other reasons we have ceased altogether to assign individual children in mission schools to individuals, churches, or societies in this country for support. Arrangements of this kind that were made in the past are still allowed to stand, but no new ones are being made by our foreign mission office.

Another form of special object giving which we have ceased to encourage is the direct support of individual native preachers and workers. The chief objection to this form of special object giving is that it hinders the de-

velopment of self-support in the native church. Our constant effort is to develop in the native churches such a spirit of self-support as will make them unwilling to be dependent on foreigners for their financial support any longer than is absolutely necessary. Before it can become a strong and aggressive agent for the evangelization of its own country and people, the native church must learn the great lesson of self-reliance. It has been found by experience, as our knowledge of human nature should have taught us in the beginning to expect, that the spirit of self-help is much more easily developed when the financial help it is necessary to give comes from a general fund administered by the mission, so that the amount given to any individual can be increased, diminished, or withdrawn entirely according to the actual need, than it is when the help comes from individuals in this country directly to those who are helped.

Another form of special object giving which we do not encourage is the sending of contributions directly to the individual missionary on the field to be used at his discretion. The receipt of such contributions is a matter of almost daily occurrence, and they are always forwarded as directed. Many of our good people think that, as a matter of course, any missionary on the field must know better than any committee here at home how to use a given sum of money for the best purpose, and therefore insist upon making their contributions in this way. It will perhaps be worth while for these givers to

consider the following facts: Each of our separate missions is composed of a number of individual missionaries who are organized into a mission. This mission holds an annual meeting, to which each individual missionary brings his proposed plan of work for the ensuing year. These plans are compared, discussed, and modified according to the judgment of the whole mission as expressed by a majority vote. The result is a general plan of work in which the special work of each missionary and the amount of funds to be asked from the home treasury to meet the cost of this work are agreed on. Now, for the givers at home to send their funds directly to the individual members of the mission, after this general plan has been agreed on, to be used for work not included in the general plan, if done to any very large extent, would mean confusion and anarchy in the work of that mission. In this free country we cannot forbid any member of our church to buy New York Exchange and mail it to any missionary anywhere in the world to whom he may wish to send it, and to make any request of that missionary he may choose to make as to the use to which his contribution shall be put. We do not, however, encourage that method of missionary giving, and we try to forestall the trouble that it might cause by requiring our missionaries to report all these outside funds which they receive to their mission treasurers, and to use them only for work of which the mission as such has expressed its approval.

Special object work as approved and incorporated in the plan of the Forward Movement has been reduced to these two forms:

First, we heartily approve the payment of the salaries of individual missionaries by individuals, churches, or societies. This is a method of missionary giving which, we believe, has been proven by experience to be good. There are certain difficulties and drawbacks connected with it of which those who make their contributions in this way should be informed and which they should always keep in mind. For instance, those who contribute to the salary of a missionary without knowing him personally, as is often the case, sometimes form an erroneous idea as to his personality. Then afterwards, when a meeting is brought about, there is the possibility of the contributor having his missionary enthusiasm abated on account of the facts of the case being revealed. The missionary frequently goes to the foreign field before he has had opportunity to learn the facile use of his mother tongue in public address. He may also have "a physical man" well adapted to battling with the unsanitary conditions and climates which are to be found in most mission lands, but not adapted to making a favorable impression on those whom he may meet for the first time. While he may be an eminently useful and successful missionary, he may also be one of whom his enemies might say, as they said of the greatest of missionaries: "His words are weighty and powerful,

but his bodily presence is weak and his speech is contemptible." When this missionary comes home on furlough, it will behoove the individual, church, or society that supports him to remember that his value as a missionary is not to be measured by his personal attractiveness in the parlor or on the platform.

Furthermore, some of the very best missionaries we have are not good letter writers. They may not have the letter-writing gift, or their work may be of such a character as to make it impossible for them to find time to write interesting letters to their home supporters. Also in the work which they are doing there is oftentimes for long intervals an entire absence of anything in the nature of stirring adventure; and so it is not always possible to guarantee that the hopes of those who undertake to pay the salaries of our missionaries with the expectation of a regular and interesting correspondence with them can be realized.

Nevertheless, in spite of these occasional embarrassing features of the case, this method of having individual missionaries assigned to individuals, churches, or societies for support has proven on the whole to be eminently satisfactory. The objection is sometimes made to it that it must tend to narrow the interest of the givers to the work of the individual whom they support. While in some instances this may have been the case, we are sure that more often than otherwise the very reverse is true. There are members of our churches who had practi-

cally no missionary knowledge or interest to begin with, but who have been induced to subscribe to the personal support of a missionary. When they hear a letter from this missionary read from the pulpit, their attention is aroused and they begin to obtain a knowledge of the particular work done by a particular person in a particular field. They are interested in this work because they are linked to the person who is doing it by the tie of their contribution. Incidentally they are led by this fact to read an article on missions in a church paper or in a missionary magazine. Gradually they learn that the work in which they are interested is only a sample of the foreign-mission work as a whole; and by this process they come to have an interest in the general work which they would never otherwise obtain. We believe it is a fact that, as a rule, the churches and individuals throughout our bounds who are supporting individual missionaries have far more knowledge of our general work and a far larger and more intense interest in it than those who only contribute to the general cause of missions. So far as raising missionary funds is concerned, certainly the easiest of all funds to raise are those which go to pay the salary of the living missionary. The demand for this privilege has become so widespread that when a new missionary is appointed, there is nearly always some church, society, or individual waiting to have him assigned to them for support.

THE SHARE PLAN.

But the payment of the salaries of the missionaries provides for just about one-half of the whole cost of our foreign-mission work. The other half is used in providing for the missionaries' equipment and facilities for their work—such as homes to live in, schoolhouses to teach in, chapels to preach in, funds for printing, traveling and ministering to the sick, and support of native preachers and helpers. This part of the cost of the work we have divided into shares of fifty dollars each. We take the estimates and find out how many of these shares will be required to provide all the expenses of each station in each field. Churches, societies, or individuals not able to provide for the whole salary of a missionary, but desiring to have something more definite than the general cause to work for and pray for, can have assigned to them one or more of these station shares, on the understanding that our home office will make an honest effort to secure from each station a quarterly report of its work, and send these reports as regularly as we can to those who pledge themselves for the payment of the shares.

This is the form of special object work which I believe to be on the whole the best. It secures practically all that is secured by the support of the individual missionary, which is the interest which comes from the knowledge secured by direct reports from the field, and avoids the danger of any diminution of interest on account of

disappointment in the personality of the missionary. It makes it a little more certain that the giver will receive a regular report from the work he supports. When the station fails to send in the report to be distributed from the home office, we generally try to compile one from the general correspondence, so that there will not be an entire lack of fuel for the missionary fire of the church or society. This form of special object work also has the advantage over all other forms of permanence. "God buries his workers, but carries on his work." Missionaries come and go, but the station remains. It not only remains, but the work at the station constantly enlarges and becomes more and more interesting to those who support it. Another advantage of the share plan is that the funds given go largely to the support of the native side of the work, which always tends to become more and more important until, eventually, it becomes the whole thing. Our aim and effort in all mission fields is to build up at each mission station a work which we can eventually turn over to the native Christians of that station, who will care for it and propagate it without our aid, so that we can cease to expend our means and energy upon it and go on to the regions beyond.

In the last place, we commend the share plan especially because it puts it within the reach of a large number of our smaller and weaker churches to have the joy and the inspiration which comes from the living touch with the

worker and the work. There are multitudes of our churches which have preaching once or twice a month and which, in the nature of things, cannot have much instruction from the pulpit on the work of foreign missions, and, therefore, cannot have much interest in it, for whom the occasional reading of a missionary letter from a mission station in which they were interested would mean new life and new joy in all their Christian life and church work. And by introducing this plan into them and securing contributions based upon individual pledges from all the members of the church, instead of a haphazard contribution from those who might happen to be present when a basket collection was taken, they would easily and gladly give five times, and sometimes ten times, as much as they are now in the habit of giving.

We believe, therefore, that the continuation of a real Forward Movement in our missionary giving must be secured by developing it along this line and in this direction.

There are only a little over three hundred churches now enlisted in the Forward Movement. We have on our roll about three thousand churches. If one-half of the twenty-seven hundred not now giving according to this plan could have the plan inaugurated in them, it is certain that we might in this way easily reach an annual income of at least \$300,000 for the cause.